



**TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION  
RECREATION EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION  
PARKS AND RECREATION BENCHMARKING PROGRAM**

**BENCHMARKING STANDARDS  
COMPLIANCE/RESOURCE GUIDE**

**Level: Tier II Status**

**A city, town or county can be classified as Tier II provided they establish and achieve all of the objectives in Tier I and the first nine of the following sixteen objectives in Tier II. Please attach a half page overview/narrative for each standard, along with attachments.**

**Listed below each standard, is an explanation of that standard along with suggested evidence of compliance, which outlines specific required documentation/examples for inclusion with this report.**

**1. Legal Authority, Role and Responsibility**

- a. The Parks and Recreation Board developed sound policies to guide management/staff in the performance of duties, particularly related to planning, facility development and fiscal matters.
- b. The Parks and Recreation Board developed manuals pertaining to Administration (policies and operational procedures, personnel, employment), Maintenance, Aquatics, Playgrounds, Risk management, etc.
- c. Specific distinction made between policies, rules and regulations, and operational procedures.

**Explanation:** Provide legal documentation for the source of authority for the parks and recreation program. (i.e., TCA 11-21-102 & 11-24-104).

Polices are broad statements set forth by the policy making board. Rules and regulations are administrative statements developed by the chief administrator and usually approved by the board. They are based on policies and create certain requirements for staff activities. Operational procedures are guidelines produced by the administrator and staff, to facilitate the implementation of programs through assigning specific responsibilities, producing a schedule, and outlining a plan of action.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide evidence of these distinctions and how each type is developed and administered. Include copies of manuals – or table of contents – describing content and distribution method to staff. How is this process reviewed among staff, and/or board?

**2. Establishment of a formal organizational structure to include:**

- a. City/County employ's full-time Parks and Recreation Director.
- b. Some professional and support staff present to administer and supervise certain functions of the park system. Positions may include Maintenance Foreman and Maintenance Utility Worker, Secretary/Marketing, and Programmer (recreation and athletic).
- c. Creation of an organizational chart with personnel job descriptions.
- d. Establishment of adequate administrative space and equipment (office).
- e. A communication system which provides accurate and timely transfer of information, both internal and external.
- f. Specific geographical descriptions and maps should set and establish physical boundaries of the Department/Agencies' jurisdiction.
- g. Mission statement is defined and strategically placed in correspondence letterheads, flyers, pamphlets, posters, etc.

**Explanation:** The agency should have a formal structure with a full-time Parks and Recreation Director and some professional staff – such as Programmers, Supervisors, Crew Leaders, etc. Specify in detail the structure and how the system functions and develop an organizational chart. Are you fulfilling your mission statement? There should be adequate administrative space and equipment to perform the department's functions and responsibilities.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide copies of organizational charts for both the agency/department and the local governmental structure, a copy of mission statement. Provide job descriptions for all professional staff. Supply a copy of the administrative manual; a checklist of the types of administrative space utilized and to what level these offices/spaces are accessible to the public. Describe your communication system.

**3. Established partnerships:**

- a. Include the use of written agreements for cooperative operation and maintenance of facilities, program operation, facility design, land development, and finances, with other organizations, agencies or individuals.

**Explanation:** Long-range program planning utilizing cooperative agreements and established partners can create very successful programs and efficient operations.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of policies and any agreements for shared use of facilities, MOA's (Memoranda of Agreements) and

MOU's (Memoranda of Understanding), cooperative program or sponsorship efforts.

**4. Strategic Planning must include:**

- a. Input from various personnel within the department to develop and update annual departmental goals and objectives.
- b. Action Plan must illustrate planning for the future and identify: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? Who is responsible?
- c. An annual written evaluation, submitted to the chief elected official (normally the City or County Mayor), stating the progress made toward the attainment of goals and objectives and reviewed by the advisory or policy board.

**Explanation:** In order to measure progress, the department should update goals and objectives and any current plans on a regular basis. The agency must develop goals, objectives, and strategies to provide direction and communicate these to the community. The department implements a system to measure the outcomes of programs, facilities, and activities and their impact on the community. Obtaining and encouraging input from personnel also greatly improves the importance and coverage of goals and objectives statements.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of goals and objectives for each organizational component. How is input received from the public and personnel?

**5. Recreation Programs, Services and Events provided shall be based on:**

- a. Services shall be delivered in a variety of ways, such as: structured or semi-structured programs, outreach, user services, and rentals.
- b. The program should provide for recreation opportunities under primarily general supervision with some direct face-to-face leadership
- c. Training and education given to volunteers and small volunteer organizations to stimulate and assist in their ability to provide recreational programs and events independent of the supervision and control of the department.
- d. Some fees for services to augment basic recreation opportunities.
- e. Specific objectives established for each program or services offered.
- f. Programs and services available to all cultures and population residents of and visitors to the community.

**Explanation:** An inventory of programs and services and resources in the community is necessary to determine program-planning direction. A needs assessment or survey determines the needs, attitudes and interests of citizens for recreation activities. Staff should follow the principles of program planning to ensure opportunities for all.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a schedule of fees and charges, and policy of implementation; program objectives (some samples); program

planning principles utilized by your staff; copies of quarterly program brochures or newspapers showing programs/events offered for all needs and abilities; copy of a recent citizens' survey.

## **6. Marketing, Public Relations and Customer Service**

- a. A specific person within City/County administration should serve in the capacity of marketing and public relations for parks and recreation facilities and programming.

**Explanation:** The department should show its commitment to establishing community ties. This standard is addressed to show a specific intent of assigning a staff person within the agency the responsibility to develop those relationships and create new and meaningful partnerships.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a community relations plan or show the organizational chart and/or job description.

## **7. Facility Use Management**

- a. A written maintenance and operations plan is required for management of the Department's park and recreation area, facilities, and equipment. This includes, but is not limited to: established facility plan and inspection checklists, playground inspection checklists, vandalism procedures, visitor safety, athletic field plan and inspection checklists, employee orientation forms, etc.
- b. There must be an established regular review of legal requirements related to facilities inspections such as licenses, sanitary regulations, fire laws, and safety measures. Special attention is needed for swimming pools, restrooms, kitchens, sprinkler systems, or animal (zoo) facilities.
- c. There must be a preventive maintenance program, including regularly scheduled systematic inspections and careful safety checks for each facility.
- d. Competent personnel assigned for routine maintenance, repairs and minor improvements, general cleanliness and overall attractiveness of areas, facilities, and equipment with clearly defined duties.

**Explanation:** There are many types of park areas and facilities in the larger departments, and these agencies should each have a unique set of maintenance standards and/or management plans for each area/park. Special attention to preventive maintenance practices for high use facilities such as playground equipment, swimming pools, and trails.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Written maintenance/management plans; checklists for parks and facilities; preventive maintenance program outline; personnel involved in the maintenance and operations section of facility management; recent inspection reports.

## **8. Management of Information Systems/Records Management**

- a. The Department must have a central records system, including records control, maintenance, and retention.
- b. Written procedures for disbursement and receipt of funds by personnel.
- c. There must be written procedures for accident and incident information collection and use of the accident or incident report.

**Explanation:** The management information system should provide management information on the activities of the department and should provide reliable information for use in decision-making. Different types of data sources, software, and hardware used for the management of the department.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Describe and provide examples of written procedures, statistical information, data summaries, records system, etc.

## **9. Resource Management and Land Use Planning**

- a. A park planner, landscape architect, or other design professional, depending upon the nature of the project, conduct and prepare most plans and studies. The overall physical plan should have phased development (prioritization), with a capital improvement budget for each phase. The plan should provide for flexibility due to changing conditions.
- b. There should be procedures for protecting park and recreation lands and facilities from encroachment.

**Explanation:** Good planning requires special attention to the community's needs for open space, natural areas, encroachment and development pressures, and other special areas such as wetlands protection. Sound environmental practices are an important aspect of the department's overall land use plan.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide copy of standards and procedures; master site plans and/or studies; inventories of protected land, program listing or brochure of programs and facilities that illustrate your policies and/or philosophy.

## **10. Recruitment and Selection of Personnel**

- a. A written policy must provide evidence regarding cultural diversity, and non-discrimination for all employment practices.
- b. The existence of a written compensation program which is reviewed annually. There should be equity of compensation among units (departments) within the local governmental structure.
- c. A written fringe benefits program.
- d. Every effort made by the department to secure qualified personnel, especially in upper management.

**Explanation:** There should be a comprehensive aggressive recruitment and selection program to secure qualified personnel. One person should have administrative control to implement policies of cultural diversity, employee

compensation and fringe benefits, etc. The human resource or finance departments of the local governing body may supply this service.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of recruitment and selection procedures; selection process manual; cultural diversity policy of the department, or local governing body.

## 11. Human Resources

- a. A written analysis for all positions maintained on file that include, at a minimum, duties, responsibilities, and tasks of each position; and level of proficiency in the job related skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviors.
- b. Written policies which govern the administration of personnel procedures for both professional and nonprofessional employees and annual reviews.
- c. Professional park and recreation personnel must be active members of their professional organizations.
- d. There should be constructive and effective supervision of all personnel for professional growth and interpretation of programs to the community.
- e. An orientation program for all personnel employed by the department.
- f. Volunteers utilized by the Department for functions such as program leadership, financial drives and fiscal management, public relations and promotions, clerical services, and advisory councils.
- g. A program for recognition of volunteers.

**Explanation:** Department should understand and apply personnel management techniques, including job analysis, recruitment, selection, training, motivation, career development and evaluation/recognition of staff and volunteers.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Listing of professional staff with qualifications/responsibilities and the professional organizations in which they are a member; job analyses on file; current copy of orientation program; training plans and programs for all staff; comprehensive volunteer manual.

## 12. Fiscal Policy

- a. There must be a written policy for the acceptance of gifts and bequests.
- b. The department uses where feasible and appropriate, matching funding by state and federal governments, voluntary agencies, private groups, and individuals.
- c. Written procedures for fiscal management of the department.
- d. The Director, or Chief Administrator, designated with the authority and responsibility for the fiscal management of the department.
- e. Outside agencies, organizations, and corporations utilized for funding programs and facilities of many different types.
- f. The department has an accounting system that includes, at a minimum, provisions for monthly financial status reports.

**Explanation:** The department or governing body should have a policy for the acceptance of gifts and bequests. Written procedures for fiscal management for the department are essential when dealing with outside agencies, grants, etc.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide the procedures and guidelines for fiscal policies; records/reports and recent examples of government cost sharing (matching funds); copies of monthly financial reports.

### 13. Budgeting

- a. Department personnel prepared written recommendations, based on operational and activity analysis, for use in the development of the budget.
- b. There are written procedures for inventory control of the department's property, equipment, and other assets.

**Explanation:** The budget preparation is in conjunction with all major operational/organizational components within the department. Guidelines available to encourage input and enhance coordination in the budget process by key personnel.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide procedures or written recommendations illustrating staff involvement; a copy of procedures and practices for budget control.

### 14. Risk Management

- a. Risk management analysis systematically performed annually identifying risk control procedures.

**Explanation:** Use methods and tools appropriate for your type of department/agency – it is important that the department has a systematic procedure established to assure total assessment for avoidance of unexpected losses.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of the most recent analysis (past 5 years).

### 15. Safety and Security

- a. The authority of all park and recreation personnel for law enforcement, traffic control, and general security functions are clearly set forth by a policy statement and communicated to appropriate persons. A person (staff member) designated as liaison to the jurisdictional police.
- b. There exists a plan for traffic control, worked out in conjunction with the jurisdictional police for:
  - Each activity/facility site, including parking and foot travel.

- Each major event where there are large numbers of people and vehicles.
  - Crowd control
  - Traffic patterns
  - Emergencies, natural disasters, etc.
- c. Clearly identified procedures for recording and documenting accidents and disturbances within the parks and facilities.

**Explanation:** This standard illustrates the understanding of the law enforcement in management of leisure services, including land management, personnel, human rights, financing, and risk management. Methods of compliance should be demonstrated and discussed.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of the policy and method of distribution, and name of liaison; copies or outlines of traffic control plans; record keeping procedures and copies of documents utilized in reporting.

## **16. Evaluations and Research**

- a. There shall be a systematic evaluation plan to assess outcomes and the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the department.

**Explanation:** This standard is concerned with a systematic evaluation program for the total departmental operation. Evaluations should include both the complete operation of the agency, and specific elements and services, such as service statistics, policy review, annual review of goals and objectives, program evaluation, etc.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of an evaluation plan including survey technique, system of measurements, and the most recent evaluation.